

HONORING BEN ALEXANDER

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, this coming January, the Colorado State Board of Education will lose a tremendous leader in Mr. Ben Alexander. Serving as a Member-at-Large since January, 1999, Ben has developed a reputation throughout Colorado for his work in the education reform movement.

Ben initially entered public service in the Colorado General Assembly. Elected as a state senator, he crafted meaningful education reform legislation as the chairman of the Education Committee. One particular bill involved increasing the per pupil expenditure for charter school students to more closely parallel that of their government school counterparts. I remember fondly, serving beside Ben on the Senate Education Committee. Clearly he has earned the title of "Statesman," and I'm proud to call him a friend.

Throughout his distinguished public service, Ben has consistently worked to promote better teacher training and evaluation. Colorado's Governor, Bill Owens, recognized Ben's innovation and leadership and tapped him as a key player in Colorado's education reform movement. He worked hard with Governor Owens to implement the Colorado Student Assessment Program, a plan that measures the progress of Colorado students toward content standards in reading, writing, math, and science.

Mr. Speaker, in 1818, Thomas Jefferson said, "A system of general education, which shall reach every description of our citizens from the richest to the poorest, as it was the earliest, so will it be the latest of all the public concerns in which I shall permit myself to take an interest." This quotation embodies Ben Alexander's career in public service. We will dearly miss his service on the State Board of Education.

TRIBUTE TO THE U.S.S. "COLE"

HON. DONALD A. MANZULLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on the tragic attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* and those brave American service members who lost their lives while serving their country and protecting the freedoms we Americans all enjoy, I submit for the RECORD a poem written by one of my constituents, Kathy K. Mecklenburg of Rockford, IL. Kathy's simple poem captures the heartfelt sentiments of all Americans regarding the tragedy and heroism surrounding this event. It is my privilege to place it in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE COLE TRIBUTE

This lone destroyer held no fame—
Now, history will enroll,
And fate forever changed the lives
Aboard the U.S.S. *Cole*.
To Aden she sailed into port

For loading vital petrol;
But, terrorists had other plans
To harm the U.S.S. *Cole*.

She peacefully sat docked and still
Before the dreadful, loud toll,
Which blew a forty-foot long hole
Inside the U.S.S. *Cole*.

No time for general quarters sound—
The blind attack was brute cold,
Our sailors had no time to fight
To save the U.S.S. *Cole*.

The terrorists had rammed her side
And precious cargo they stole,
For seventeen would lose their lives
Aboard the U.S.S. *Cole*.

And, now we grieve and wonder still
For kindred, sacrificed souls,
Whose lives served freedom's cause for all
Those on the U.S.S. *Cole*.

Now, God, please hear our simple prayer
And draw these souls to Thy fold,
As we salute these sailors brave
Who served the U.S.S. *Cole*.

—Kathy K. Mecklenburg, Rockford, Illinois,
October 2000.

KEEP THEM OUT!

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn the violations of the Voting Rights Act that have been reported in Florida on November 7. Election Day 2000 is a day that will live in infamy, in every American's mind who cares about the concepts of Democracy, Justice, and Equality. Thousands of votes, mostly African-American, students, and senior votes, were disqualified, and effectively, disenfranchised. Despite higher than ever turnouts of minorities and seniors, we had higher than ever rates of disqualified and disenfranchised voters, and that my colleagues is unAmerican. Bob Herbert of the New York Times has shed light on some of the egregious tactics employed by Florida elections officials attempting to keep Americans from voting, in the December 7 issue of the New York Times. I respectfully request that it be placed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, to highlight the despicable tactics employed to keep American votes from being cast and counted in the 2000 election. This article reflects much of the sentiment of African-Americans and other Americans who share these concerns about this crisis in our Democracy.

KEEP THEM OUT!

(By Bob Herbert)

The tactics have changed, but the goal remains depressingly the same: Keep the coloreds, the blacks, the African-Americans—whatever they're called in the particular instance—keep them out of the voting booths.

Do not let them vote! If you can find a way to stop them, stop them.

So here we go again, this time in Florida. It turns out that the state of Florida is using a private company with close ties to the Republican Party to help "cleanse" the state's voter registration rolls. Would it surprise anyone anywhere to learn that the cleansing process somehow managed to im-

properly prevent large numbers of African-American voters from voting in the presidential election?

Gregory Palast, a reporter with the online magazine Salon, has done a number of articles on this. He noted that the company, ChoicePoint, and its subsidiary, Database Technologies Inc. (DBT), came up with a "scrub list" of 173,000 names. These were the names of people registered to vote in Florida who, according to ChoicePoint, could be knocked off the rolls for one reason or another.

There was good reason for Florida to be concerned about the integrity of its voter registration rolls. In 1997 the mayor of Miami was removed from office because widespread fraud had occurred in the election. The following year a law was passed requiring counties in Florida to purge the rolls of duplicate registrations, the names of deceased persons and felons.

So far, so good. The problems developed when the state turned to ChoicePoint, which compiles and sells vast amounts of frequently shaky information about individuals. (ChoicePoint, which acquired DBT last May, was fired by the state of Pennsylvania for breaching the confidentiality of driving records.) With this private outfit in the picture it soon became clear that top Republican officials would be trying to reap a partisan political advantage from a law designed to correct an egregious wrong. And that partisan advantage would be realized in large part by trampling on the voting rights of minorities.

Over the spring and summer ChoicePoint was forced to acknowledge that 8,000 voters it had listed as felons had in fact been guilty only of misdemeanors, which would not have affected their right to vote. What is maddening is that when such an erroneous list of names gets into the hands of county election officials, as this one did, it is very difficult—often impossible—to find out what's correct and what's not correct.

That snickering you hear is from Republican operatives who know that these kinds of foul-ups, because they are based on criminal records, will disproportionately affect minority voters.

ChoicePoint eventually came up with a "corrected" list of 173,000 names of people it targeted as ineligible because they were deceased, or were registered more than once, or had been convicted of a felony.

But it was a lousy list, riddled with mistakes. And in an interview with me yesterday, Marty Fagan, a ChoicePoint vice president, said there had never been any expectation that the list would be particularly accurate. Remember now, we're talking about a list that would be used to strip Americans of the precious right to vote.

Mr. Fagan said the list focused on people who "might" have been deceased, or might have been listed twice, or "possible felons." He said it was "important to know" that the information needed to be "verified" by county election officials.

That was interesting, because ChoicePoint came up with 58,000 people—people registered to vote—who would fall into the category he calls "possible felons." How in the world were county election officials supposed to check out each and every one and find out if they were felons or not?

They couldn't. They didn't.

The horror stories about perfectly innocent black voters being turned away from the polls because they had been targeted as convicted felons started coming in early on the morning of Nov. 7, Election Day. And they're still coming in.